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Message Text

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56
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 CU-02 MMO-01 IO-13 AID-05 OES-06 ARAE-00 /085 W
---------- 047703
P 271625Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8573

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS:PDIP, PN
SUBJECT: RECEPTION TO US BICENTENNIAL IN PANAMA

REF: A. STATE 169682, B. PANAMA 4845, C. STATE 182477

SUMMARY: WARMTH OF RECEPTION GIVEN TO US BICENTENNIAL BY GENERAL PUBLIC IN PANAMA WAS GOOD ILLUSTRATION THAT, ASIDE FROM CANAL ISSUE, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE RESERVOIR OF OPINION HERE FAVORABLE TO THE UNITED STATES. THIS RESERVOIR SHOULD NOT BE READ AS PANAMANIAN CONSENT TO OUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP. QUITE THE CONTRARY; AMONG THOSE WHO SUPPORT A CONTINUING STRONG US PRESENCE HERE, THE STATUS QUO IS SEEN AS A CONTRADICTION OF THE IDEALS OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC. END SUMMARY.

1. PARTICIPATION IN US BICENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES BY THE PANAMANIAN PUBLIC WAS FAIRLY SUBSTANAIAL, AND RECEPTION WAS GENERALLY WARM AND APPROVING. MOST VISIBLE SINGLE ACTIVITY WAS FOURTH OF JULY PARADE IN CANAL ZONE, WHICH HAS VERY LARGE CROWDS OF PANAMANIAN ONLOOKERS DESPITE A STEADY DRIZZLE THAT MORNING. BANDS OF PANAMA CITY AND COLON FIRE DEPARTMENTS, AND SOME CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN BOTH REPUBLIC AND CANAL ZONE, MARCHED IN PARADE OR PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES ON ATLANTIC SIDE, AND LARGE NUMBERS OF PANAMANIANS ALSO ATTENDED PICNIC WHICH FOLLOWED PARADE.
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2. EMBASSY, TOO, RECEIVED FAIR NUMBER OF TELEGRAMS, LETTERS OR OTHER PERSONAL MESSAGES FROM PANAMANIANS OFFERING CONGRATULATIONS ON BICENTENNIAL, AND EMBASSY AMERICAN STAFF MEMBERS OFTEN HAD PANAMANIAN FRIENDS

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WISH US "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" AROUND THE FOURTH. LOCAL
STAFF OF AID MISSION SPONTANEOUSLY ORGANIZED A PARTY
FOR THEIR AMERICAN COLLEAGUES ON JULY 2 AS TRIBUTE TO
BICENTENNIAL.

3. LOCAL MEDIA REACTION TO BICENTENNIAL IS AS RE-
FLECTED BY USIA MEDIA REACTION REPORT FOR JULY 5, 6
AND 12 (TRASNMITTED VIA USINFO CABLE ALSO TO STATE
FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN). SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT PREPARED
BY USIS FOR JULY 4 EDITIONS OF SEMI-INDEPENDENT
"ESTRELLA" AND "STAR AND HERALD" DREW A NUMBER OF
FAVORABLE COMMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL PANAMANIANS.
EDITIONS OF PANCANAL'S WEEKLY "SPILLWAY" AND
SOUTHCOM'S "SOUTHERN COMMAND NEWS", AND SPECIAL EDITION
OF "PANAMA CANAL REVIEW", PAYING TRIBUTE TO
BICENTENNIAL ALSO CIRCULATED FAIRLY WIDELY IN PANAMA.
US ARMED FORCES TV STATIONS IN CANAL ZONE BROADCAST
SEVERAL HOURS OF LIVE AN TAPED US NETWORK COVERAGE
OF BICENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES ON JULY 4 AND THEREAFTER;
THESE APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN WELL RECEIVED BY THIS
CHANNEL'S LARGE PANAMANIAN "SHADOW AUDIENCE".

4. TONE OF MOST OF THE INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS WHICH WE
HAVE HEARD IS CAUGHT BY EDITORIAL RUN IN "ESTRELLA"
AND "STAR AND HERALD" OF JULY 4. OFFERING GREETINGS
TO ALL AMERICANS RESIDENT IN PANAMA, THE EDITORIAL
STATED, "IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO SUMMARIZE ALL THAT
MANKIND OWES TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
AND THEIR PERMANENT DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE OF
FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY...AND WE REITERATE ON THIS
OCCASION OUR TRUST THAT, IN THE NEAR FUTURE, ITS (US)
RELATIONS WITH OUR COUNTRY WILL REFLECT THE LOFTY
SENTIMENTS THAT INSPIRED ITS ILLUSTRIOUS FOUNDING
FATHERS TO AFFIX THEIR SIGNATURES 200 YEARS AGO TODAY
TO THAT GLORIOUS DOCUMENT THAT IS THE AMERICAN DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE."
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5. RECEPTION ACCORDED TO VIKING I MARS LANDING IS A
FOOTNOTE TO BICENTENNIAL IN SIMILAR TONE. VIKING
PHOTOS WERE PRINTED, SOME IN COLOR, BY MOST LOCAL
PAPERS, BOTH GOP-INFLUENCED AND SEMI-INDEPENDENT, WITH
VERY FAVORABLE EDITORIAL COMMENT. PRO-GOP "EL PANAMA
AMERICA", WHICH IS USUALLY CRITICAL OF VARIOUS ASPECTS
OF US PRESENCE HERE, LAUDED EFFORTS OF US SCIENTISTS
WHICH, IT SAID, HAD JUSTLY EARNED PRAISE OF ENTIRE
WORLD AND WHOSE RESULTS WOULD BE PLACED AT THE SERVICE
OF ALL MANKIND.

6. COMMENT: THE GENUINE POPULAR SENTIMENT ILLUSTRATED
BY SUM OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS, GREETINGS OR CONGRATU-

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LATIONS WE RECEIVED DEMONSTRATED AGAIN A POINT WHICH IS SO OBVIOUS TO THOSE HERE IN THE ISTHMUS THAT IT IS SOMETIMES OVERLOOKED: THAT LEAVING ASIDE POLITICALLY INSTRUMENTAL REACTIONS BY THE GOVERNMENT OT ISSUES OF THE MOMENT, THERE IS IN PANAMA A VERY SUBSTANTIAL RESERVOIR OF OPINION FAVORABLE TO THE UNITED STATES. IN ITSELF, THIS IS UNSURPRISING; OUR SOCIETIES HAVE LIVED CLOSE TOGETHER FOR THE PAST SEVEN DECADES AND BY LARGE IN A GENERAL STATE OF AMITY.

7. IN MANY WAYS, HOWEVER, THIS REAL INCLINATION TO RESPECT OR ADMIRE THE US ALSO SERVES TO INCREASE PUBLIC RECEPTIVITY TO ATTACKS VERGING ON THE DEMAGOGIC ABOUT OUR PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE. AMERICAN IDEALS ABOUT INDEPENDENCE CAN BE HEADY STUFF, AND THOSE IN PANAMA CLOSEST TO OUR CULTURE AND EXPERIENCE--AND MOST ANXIOUS TO PRESERVE A STRONG AND VIABLE AMERICAN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PRESENCEHERE--OBSERVE THAT THE CANAL ZONE IS, FROM PANAMA'S STANDPOINT, A VISIBLE LOCAL CONTRADITION TO THEM. THUS, THERE IS NO NECESSARY INCONSISTENCY IN THE SAME INDIVIDUAL PANAMANIAN'S RESPECTING OR EVEN LIKING THE UNITED STATES AND AMERICANS AS INDIVIDUALS, AND INTENSELY DISLIKING OR REJECTING THE CANAL ZONE AS AN AMERICAN INSTITUTION IN PANAMA. THIS HONEST POPULAR SENTIMENT INCLINED TOWARD US IN NO WISE ALLEVIATES THE DECLINING CONSENT TO OUR PRESENCE AS NOW STRUCTURED, A DECLINE
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WHICH MAY SOME DAY BECOME SEVERE ENOUGH TO WIPE OUT THE FAVORABLE OPINION WHICH IT OUGHT TO BE ONE OF OUR OBJECTIVES TO PRESERVE. END COMMENT.

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